

MARKETING

How to make a brand iconic

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By **Matteo Atti**

In times of insecurity, iconic products are a safe harbor for clients a way to buy that comes with a brand guarantee and public reputation on which you can count.

Therefore, in the last few years, leading luxury consumer brands have navigated the storm of the pandemic and seen their product sales over-perform their smaller competitors and those that were new to the market.

Rolls-Royce car sales went through the roof. Waiting lists for Herms bags and Goyard luggage became miles long.

What does iconic mean?

Iconic products represent their category as the first to come to mind when thinking of that category. They stand out as the most remarkable and memorable product.

Iconic is not a matter of scale or profitability. It is about recognizability and unquestioned premiership.

Iconic brands require to be universal in what they represent.

To become part of the collective consciousness, a brand must become the symbol of a way to approach the world: like the Red Cross is for medical assistance, IKEA is for affordable design and Bottega Veneta is for understated style.

An iconic brand is one that everyone knows what it stands for, has created a product that anchors a category and has become synonymous with a collective dream.

How do you become iconic?

We respond to first-hand experiences.

From a branding perspective, experiences are nothing more than stories passed on. They are normally something quite simple: simply unusual or inspiring.

An unexpected feeling of satisfaction that produces a straightforward, desirable outcome will leave a memory and the desire to relate the story, or to experience that moment of fulfillment again.

An iconic brand delivers a clear expectation of undisputable excellence. Cartier's Love ring is a reliable and widely recognized symbol of enduring affection even for consumers who never entered a Cartier shop.

Do marketers know their brand?

When thinking of the brand they have been nurturing and loving for years, marketers know it all the highs, the lows, the past, the future.

When asked to name what makes their brand iconic, though, it is easy to focus on the thing they spent more time developing, or projects closer to their heart.

Unfortunately, what we believe in having left a mark on our audience is often different than what the brand team itself might think.

This was the case with Chanel where a survey of internal "icons" selected the Little Black Dress, the atelier and Coco herself while for customers it was the double C logo and Chanel No. 5.

Should you be so lucky to be asked to care for an iconic brand, remember it is part of the collective knowledge and you should always ask why consumers love your brand, and what really is the symbol and the driver of your brand's fame.

How to shape your brand to become an icon?

Select a space to excel in

- Which products fill your category?
- Is there space for a new one? One that "does" something for you?
- Can you express what it does uniquely in one line? For example, Apple offers advanced technology that is simple to use

Find the root of your icon

- What do your clients mention as your standout achievement?
- What did they fall in love with?
- Why?

Let consumers give it a name about which they feel good

- Let your audience speak about your brand and listen to what they select as relevant aspects. Use their language and embrace their views
- If they call it Coke - call it Coke. Do not call it a multimedia mobile device, call it a phone, maybe a smartphone

Select your brand signifier

- Something simple that customers can mention, something they can recognize in an instant that tells the story of your icon without elaborating more
- The WWF panda (caring for endangered species), the orange box of Herms (timeless and unique)

Let it change and stay the same

- If it is iconic, you cannot be the only one loving it. Invite people to play with it
- An icon is owned by a culture not an individual
- It is your gift to the community, a reference and real part of their life

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